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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION YOUTH LEADER RECONSIDERS HIS ACTIVITIES
FOLLOWING RELEASE FROM DETENTION

REF: MINSK 1110

Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reasons 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Authorities conditionally released youth opposition activist Pavel Krasovskiy from police custody on October 15, following 10 days of questioning in connection with two 2005 Vitebsk bombings and a 1999 murder and rape case. After strong words of support from Ambassador, Krasovskiy admitted that he is uncertain about whether he will continue his opposition work for fear of being questioned or imprisoned again. Krasovskiy stressed that the authorities had no evidence to convict him in either case, but instead sought information about his opposition activities and used the questionings as a "political experiment" to slander and intimidate opposition activists. End summary.

¶2. (C) On October 15, authorities released youth opposition Malady Front activist Pavel Krasovskiy after 10 days in pretrial detention for lack of evidence connecting him to two 2005 Vitebsk bombings and the rape and murder of two women in 1999 (reftel). The authorities noted, however, that both cases remain open and Krasovskiy is still under investigation.

Unending Questions Yield No Answers

¶3. (C) On October 19, Krasovskiy told Poloff that the police subjected him to seven days of questioning for an average of seven hours per day. Authorities focused most of their attention on Krasovskiy's opposition activities, his work with youth in Zhodino and his political views. Krasovskiy noted that the police asked him only one question about the bombings but insisted that he is connected to the incident and perhaps gave the order for the bombings to happen. The police also took blood from Krasovskiy to run DNA tests in connection with the 1999 rape and murder cases. Krasovskiy's lawyer was present for all the questionings, but the authorities allowed Krasovskiy and his lawyer to have one only private meeting.

Krasovskiy's Theories on His Detention and Release

¶4. (C) Krasovskiy told Poloff that he was certain the authorities could not implicate him in either case and therefore detained and questioned him for different reasons. He told Poloff that before he was taken into pretrial detention, he was released for one night on his own recognizance. Krasovskiy suspected that the police released him because they wanted him to flee the country. Then they could use his flight as an indication of guilt and thus make

him the scapegoat for the Vitebsk bombings. When Krasovskiy instead returned to the police the next day for questioning and was taken into custody, he believed the authorities opted to use the situation as a "political experiment" to test how well imprisonment and public slandering of lesser-known opposition activists would frighten them into stopping their work.

Krasovskiy Uncertain About Continuing Opposition Activities

15. (C) Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, who dropped by Poloff's meeting with Krasovskiy to express their concern and support, asked the leader about his plans for future youth activities. Krasovskiy admitted that he was uncertain about continuing his opposition work in the future, especially given the amount of time and effort it would take to rebuild all the files that he lost when the authorities seized his computers. Moreover, he is afraid of being called back in for questioning and imprisoned again. Even if the Vitebsk bombings and the murder charges are dropped, the authorities could still charge him with leading an unregistered youth organization Malady Front.

Comment

16. (C) The government's line of questioning and Krasovskiy's release suggest that the GOB did not consider him a serious suspect in either case but instead used the opportunity to further chip away at the will of the opposition. The regime's strong-armed tactics appear to have deeply affected Krasovskiy, but perhaps time and the further deterioration of democratic freedom in Belarus will prompt the energetic youth leader to get back in the saddle.

Stewart